Claims

1.   A method of negotiating a cost sharing formula associated with a communication service between a plurality of participants, the service being facilitated using the Session Initiation Protocol, the method comprising:

sending a Session Initiation Protocol message from a terminal used by a first of the participants to terminals used by the or each other participant, the message containing a cost sharing request; and

at the or each terminal receiving said Session Initiation Protocol message, processing the request using predefined cost sharing rules and/or receiving user inputs relating to the request, and sending a Session Initiation Protocol response message to the first participant's terminal containing a result,

configuring one or more Session Initiation Protocol servers to intercept Session Initiation Protocol messages for the purpose of determining the negotiated cost sharing formula, and the participants being charged by the network(s) in accordance with the formula.
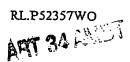
2.   A method according to claim 1, wherein the message containing the cost sharing request is sent from either a terminal initiating a service, or from a terminal which has received a service initiation request from another terminal.

3.   A method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the terminal receiving a cost sharing request returns a response to the sending terminal accepting a cost sharing proposal contained or identified in the request.

4.   A method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the receiving terminal sends a response to the sending terminal, proposing an alternative or modified cost sharing proposal.

5.   A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein three or more participants are invited to join the service, the terminal sending the request coordinating received responses and finalising the cost sharing arrangement.
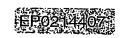
6.   A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the cost sharing procedure is performed prior to the initiation of the communication service, upon initiation, during a service, or after a service has been terminated.

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7.   A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the network supporting the service and connecting the participating terminals comprises a 3GPP IP Multimedia Subsystem.

10   8.   A Session Initiation Protocol enabled communication terminal comprising:

transmission means for exchanging user and Session Initiation Protocol signalling data with one or more peer Session Initiation Protocol terminals via a communications network;

means coupled to said transmission means for receiving and sending cost

15   sharing requests to and from peer terminals, the cost sharing requests relating to a communication service involving the terminals and being carried in Session Initiation Protocol messages;

means for implementing a set of cost sharing rules following the sending or receipt of a cost sharing proposal in order to agree upon a cost sharing formula.

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9.   A terminal according to claim 8, the terminal being a mobile wireless terminal.

10.   A Session Initiation Protocol server for use in an IP Multimedia Core Network Subsystem of a communications system, the server comprising:

25   means for causing Session Initiation Protocol signalling, associated with a cost sharing negotiation between two or more user terminals coupled to the system, to be diverted through the server; and

means for extracting agreed cost sharing data from the diverted signalling, and for either allocating costs to one or more of the terminal users in accordance with this

30   data, or for providing information to another system node to allow that node to allocate costs.